



MEDIA FAIRNESS INITIATIVE: A WEEKLY LOOK AT BIAS IN THE NEWS

Friday, November 9, 2007



Partisanship & Campaign Coverage

Press coverage of presidential campaign	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
Excellent	6	4	8	5
Good	35	36	49	27
Only fair	32	34	25	37
Poor	21	23	14	24
Don't know	6	3	4	7
	100	100	100	100
NET: Excellent/Good	41	40	57	32

Democrats More Visible to Voters

The American public is significantly more familiar with Democrat presidential candidates than Republican candidates, according to a new survey by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

Overall, **81 percent can name a Democrat candidate unprompted**, with 78 percent mentioning Sen. Hillary Clinton's name and 62 percent offering Sen. Barack Obama's. By contrast, **just 59 percent could name any Republican candidate**. Former Mayor Rudy Giuliani is the best known Republican candidate, with 45 percent of the public naming him.

Even among Republican respondents, Clinton and Obama are much more visible than Giuliani or any other Republican presidential candidate. When asked to name any Democrat presidential candidate, 79 percent of Republicans named Clinton and 60 percent mentioned Obama. When asked for the name of a Republican candidate, 57 percent of Republicans named Giuliani. No other Republican candidate was mentioned by even half of Republicans.

In rating the job the press has done in covering the 2008 presidential campaign, the balance of opinion is largely negative at this point in the race. More than half of Americans (53 percent) rate the coverage as only fair or poor. Just six percent describe the coverage as excellent (see graphic).

Morning Network TV News Favors Democrats

One reason for the Democrats' increased public visibility might be that the media have favored Democrat candidates rather than Republicans.

For example, television networks have spent more time covering the Democratic race and spent far more time interviewing the Democratic candidates than the Republicans, according to a new Media Research Center (MRC) study of the ABC, CBS and NBC morning news shows from January 1-October 31, 2007.

All three networks spent more time covering the Democrats' nomination race than the contest for the GOP nomination (see graphic). Overall, 431 out of the total 797 campaign segments (54 percent) focused on the Democrats, compared to 247 (31 percent) devoted to the Republicans. The remaining 119 stories (15 percent) either dealt with both parties about equally, or dealt with a nonpartisan campaign topic.

Since January 1, MRC documented 102 morning show appearances by a presidential candidate or a campaign representative. Of these, **nearly two-thirds (64) featured Democrats, compared to just 36 for the Republicans** and two for potential independent candidate Michael Bloomberg.

Interviews with the various Democrat campaigns totaled 6 hours 24 minutes, compared to just over three hours (184 minutes) for the Republicans – a greater than two-to-one discrepancy. Democrat candidates Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards all received more interview airtime than any Republican candidate.

